

Washington, DC – Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) drafted a bill that would prevent him and his fellow Members of Congress their automatically scheduled salary adjustment in 2010. The Congressman co-sponsored legislation last year (H.R. 5087) that would have prevented the 2.8 percent pay increase that went into effect for 2009, but that bill was not brought to the floor for a vote. Since 1975, pay increases for Members of Congress take effect automatically unless disapproved by Congress. In 2007, Congressman Sestak strongly supported, and voted for, the provision that prevented a pay increase for that year. —

“With a year-old recession continuing, more than 500,000 jobs lost last November alone and the news of a projected \$1.2 trillion deficit, allowing this salary increase to continue next year is not good government,” said Congressman Sestak. “Many of my constituents, and millions of Americans, are experiencing particularly difficult times right now in part because of the failures of the federal government to conduct proper oversight, such as in the case of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac as well as financial institutions on Wall Street. I am confident that this Congress will pursue a proper stimulus package, comprehensive housing legislation and a continuation of the accountable approach to business in general as we worked to do in the last Congress. However, we should not accept an increase in the taxpayer money we receive until we provide consistent, concrete results to the taxpayers that show we are turning the economy around.”

Preventing a pay increase is in line with the Congressman’s themes for all of his work in Washington and the District: accountability, transparency and bipartisanship. The Congressman has particularly emphasized these principles with regard to the economic crisis. He has emphasized the importance of a bipartisan stimulus package to avoid having a much more severe, protracted recession in 2009 than would otherwise occur. Effort is needed to restore the building blocks for sustaining current employment and creating new, high value jobs for the future. At the same time, he believes we need to spend stimulus money most effectively to target the needs likely to provide the highest benefit across the broader economy in the near future, such as job creation in the renewable energy and infrastructure industries.

To ensure accountability, the Congressman has been involved in Congressional hearings examining the root causes and effects of the turmoil in our economy and has written to Secretary Paulson noting that the “restoration of public confidence in our governmental and financial institutions can not begin until the American taxpayers see consistent enforcement of the oversight provisions – and behavior from the financial institutions acknowledging that many of them share the responsibility for the economic crisis that has engulfed our country and the rest of the global economy.” Therefore, it is most incumbent upon Congress to ensure full transparency through accountable oversight of the actions taken by the Federal Government – correcting the absence of these which led to the market’s failure.

Furthermore, the Congressman wrote to Speaker Nancy Pelosi to ask her to join him in demanding Secretary Paulson follow the accountability measures specified in the Stabilization bill and calling on the Democratic leadership to accelerate the assignments of positions on the Congressional Oversight Panel so that it could meet its requirements for supervising use of taxpayer funds. The final appointments were announced on Thursday 21 November, more than 6 weeks after the bill was originally passed by the House and Senate.

Congressman Sestak also has sent a letter to United States Attorney General Michael Mukasey requesting him to “conduct an appropriate and thorough investigation into any and all financial institutions, corporations, and individuals that are suspect of criminal action relating to our current economic crisis.”

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the Congress.*

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